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## **MINNEAPOLIS SELECTED TO HOST THE NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES IN 2005**

*U.S. Competition Offers Volunteer and Sponsorship Opportunities*

MINNEAPOLIS – November 15, 2004 – Minneapolis, dubbed the *Most Fun City in America* by *Money Magazine*, will host one of the most strenuous and spirited athletic competitions in the world next June, when more than 500 disabled athletes from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain will arrive to compete in the 25<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

The Games, presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition because of spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The 2005 event will be hosted by the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis and the Minnesota Chapter of PVA.

The 25<sup>th</sup> National Wheelchair Games will also feature special celebrations recognizing 25 years of excellence at the event, first held in 1981. It attracts disabled veterans from all branches of service who will come to compete in the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, June 27–July 1, 2005.

Competitive events will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Fort Snelling Soccer Fields, Como Park, Lake Harriet and other local venues. The 2005 Games will feature stiff competition in 16 different events including track and field, basketball, weightlifting, softball, quad rugby, a motorized wheelchair rally, power soccer, swimming, handcycling, wheelchair slalom, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, air guns and archery. Trap shooting and golf will also be offered as exhibition events. The public is invited to attend the sports competitions at the Games as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Admission is free.

According to Sharon Skolblik, local coordinator for the 2005 Games, the event will require more than 2,500 volunteers from the twin cities area. "There are opportunities to volunteer in a number of different activities at the Games, from setting up the venues to meals, transportation and helping the athletes get ready to compete. We rely on local volunteers to really make this happen," Skolblik said.

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## **2/2/2/2 Minneapolis to Host 2005 National Veterans Wheelchair Games**

The theme for the 2005 Games – *"Catch the Spirit,"* reflects the great fishing and outdoor sporting opportunities in the Minneapolis area. The theme honors the athletes' competitive character while recognizing the active and fun spirit of the people of Minneapolis. "We are proud to host this year's Games," said Steve Klienglass, Director of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. "As we recognize 25 years of excellence, we celebrate each and every athlete's journey to victory. Just as the heroic spirit of America's veterans contributes to our quality of life, Minneapolis' spirit of adventure will provide the backdrop for a truly quality event, recognizing the courage, determination and athletic excellence of these competitors."

"In 1981, I was one of 74 registered athletes at the Games in Richmond, Virginia, said Richard Jost, Executive Director of the Minnesota PVA. At that time all you had to do was participate in one of the events to medal and none of my events had more than three competitors. In 2004, I was one of 500 athletes attending and the competition was fierce. I realized then that the Games are not just about sports and competition – they are about taking control of your life. I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones as we celebrate 25 years of excellence in Minneapolis this year."

In addition to the competitions and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games will also include a variety of other events such as "Kids Day at the Games," where local children, including many with disabilities, will interact with the athletes, participate in sports events and watch the veterans compete.

Information about sponsorship opportunities for the 2005 National Veterans Wheelchair Games, volunteer registration, and the planned schedule of activities is available by calling (612) 467-5273.

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# National Veterans Wheelchair Games



**About VA:** The Department of Veterans Affairs is a world leader in rehabilitation, with rehabilitation therapy programs at each of its medical facilities. VA's goal is to provide excellence in patient care, veterans' benefits and customer satisfaction. VA employees continue to offer their dedication and commitment to help veterans get the services they have earned. To learn about VA and programs for veterans, visit VA's web site at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

**About PVA:** Founded in 1946, Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of individuals with spinal cord injury or disease. PVA is a dynamic, broad-based organization with more than 21,000 members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To learn more about PVA, visit its web site at [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org).